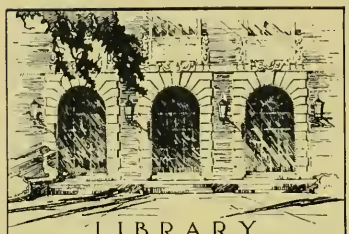

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AND

COLLEGE SERVICES.

A LETTER

ADDRESSED TO

THE VICAR OF ST. MARY-THE-VIRGIN'S,

BY

CHARLES WALDEGRAVE SANDFORD, M.A.,

SENIOR CENSOR OF CHRIST CHURCH, OXFORD;
CHAPLAIN TO THE LORD BISHOP OF LONDON; AND LATE WHITEHALL PREACHER.

Oxford:
MESSRS. PARKER AND CO.
1866.

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My dear Sir,

A copy of your second letter to the Vice-Chancellor reached me on the morning of Christmas Day. I do not know whom I have to thank for it; but if I owe it to your courtesy, I offer you my best acknowledgments. Pardon me for having thought that there are some expressions in it, the absence of which would have rendered it a more acceptable Christmas present. When I wrote to the Vice-Chancellor on the subject of the University Sermon and the College Services, I had no idea that I should provoke a controversy, or bring upon myself an attack from the Vicar of St. Mary's. That there should be anything in my letter to annoy you I deeply regret. You appear however not to have read it very carefully, for you criticize it as propounding schemes which I myself cannot find in it. For example:—

I. You represent me as recommending a plan "which would render the morning University Sermon generally inaccessible to members of the University." What I did recommend was that the Morning Sermon should be preached at an hour which would be more convenient than 10.30 to those who desire to attend two Services before the Sermon, and would at the same time be quite as convenient as the present hour to members of the University generally: I had hoped also as convenient to the Vicar and the parish of St. Mary's; but in this it seems I was in error. You will pardon me if I refer for one moment to our

present arrangement at Christ Church. We have an early Communion at 7.30. This Service is over at 8.15. We then have breakfast. Morning Prayer is said at 9. This Service is over at 10. You cannot wonder if after attending two Services we desire a longer interval than half-an-hour before we attend a third.

You say of yourself "that in the two years during which I have been Vicar of St. Mary's, I have not found it necessary to be absent at seven o'clock, while resident, either on Sundays or Saints' days, more than once or twice. I may truly add that there is nothing requisite on my side but *a will*." But your case is different from that which I am now considering. You are a parochial clergyman. Your busy day is Sunday. You expect to have to make an effort on that day, and, as you say, you make it. But to industrious Undergraduates Sunday should be the day of rest. If they feel it to be their duty, they will be in Chapel at 7 or 7.30 for the early Communion, and again at 9 for the Morning Service. But it is unjust to take them severely to task, if, after that, they prefer reading quietly in their rooms to listening to a Sermon at St. Mary's, especially if University Sermons as a general rule be such as you describe them. Again, you are one whose habits are formed. You act on principle. You feel "the greatness of the privilege." No inconvenience or hardship would deter you from availing yourself of it. But to Undergraduates in whom habits and principles are not yet fully formed,—in whom the will, though not wanting, is not yet perfect,—who are learning to appreciate the greatness of the privilege, and, it may be, are not yet fully alive to it,—is it wise to present obstacles

which require an effort to overcome, on the ground that "the effort is an excellent test of earnestness?" If it be desirable that they should attend the early Communion, it is desirable surely to fix the service at an hour which would encourage, not discourage, attendance. It no doubt is praiseworthy to have trodden the path of duty consistently, in spite of difficulties, but that is no reason why we should place difficulties in the path which the young are being taught to tread.

II. You represent me as recommending the abolition of the Afternoon University Sermon. What I did suggest was this: "If College authorities would undertake to provide a College Sermon, the Afternoon University Sermon might be abolished; or, in its place, an Evening Sermon might be substituted." I suggested the abolition of the Afternoon Sermon conditionally, not absolutely. But even if the abolition of the Afternoon University Sermon were a necessary consequence of the plan I advocate, I maintain that it is of more importance that there should be a College Chapel Service, at a time and of a character that would recal to the mass of the Undergraduates the associations of a home Sunday, than that there should be two University Sermons. Of course, if the Afternoon University Sermon were abolished, the College Sermon would be preached in the afternoon, as is the case now in some Colleges. On the subject of College Sermons I am glad to find that we agree.

III. You represent me as asking the University to legislate for one particular class in one particular Society. On the contrary, I asked the University to legislate specially, though not exclusively, in the interest of three classes, none of them confined to

Christ Church, namely, the Undergraduates who neglect to attend the University Sermon, the Undergraduates and others who attend the early weekly Communion, and the College Servants. That Christ Church is not the only Society in which there are Undergraduates who absent themselves from the University Sermon, I proved by reference to the fact that it is only to hear some well-known Preacher that the University Church is filled, and that when filled it contains no more than one-fourth of the Undergraduates in residence. To this fact there is no allusion in your replies to my letter. It is not, then, to enable the members of Christ Church alone to observe Sunday better than some of them now observe it, nor "to improve the imperfect discipline" of this particular College, that I propose to legislate; for I hold that Sunday is observed as well in Christ Church as elsewhere, and though our discipline may be imperfect, yet, in spite of the number of our Undergraduates, and the wealth and rank of many of them, it will bear comparison with the discipline of any College in the University. But even were my object that which you suggest, the whole society of Undergraduate Oxford is influenced by the tone of religious feeling among the Undergraduates of Christ Church: and it is the consciousness of this that deepens my sense of responsibility. That however mine is not a "selfish scheme," proposed in the interest of one College only, is proved by the fact that the Memorial, as Mr. Kitchin notices, was signed by leading members of University, Balliol, Exeter, and other Colleges, as well as by members of Christ Church. The same also is shewn by the following extracts, which I have been permitted to publish, from letters which my pamphlet

elicited from Tutors, past and present, of University, Merton, and Magdalen Colleges.

Mr. Bright, a Fellow and Tutor of University, writes thus:—"I have read your letter with great pleasure. It seems to me precisely to meet the case. I only wish the arrangement to which it points, or something substantially equivalent, may be realized."

A former Fellow and Tutor of Magdalen writes thus: —"Most heartily must I express my agreement with what you have said on the subject of College Sermons. A short practical sermon in Chapel would benefit both hearers and preachers. The preparation of such a discourse would give a wholesome stimulus to many a College Tutor or Dean. I am thankful that the subject has been brought forward by one in your position. I shall be only too glad if I can help in forwarding any plan for the better keeping of an Oxford Sunday."

Mr. Medd, a Fellow and Tutor of University, writes:—"I am inclined to agree with every word of your letter—indeed it expresses very much the conclusions which (urged by much the same considerations as those you mention, and which must be felt in every College,) we had already come to ourselves. I am especially grateful for the lift you have given to the move for weekly Communions. I should perhaps be inclined to prefer 12.15 or 12.30 for the Sermon, and so, I think, would the Vicar of St. Mary's. Most probably Colleges which do not care to alter their Sunday Morning Service to 10, might still like the Sermon later than now, as giving a quiet morning beforehand for Sunday reading. Perhaps the way to have the Sermons altered would be for Colleges to put their Services at 10, if they will, at once.

That alone would be a great gain in many ways. I sympathize too, as I said the other day in your rooms, with the idea of an Evening University Sermon."

A former Fellow and Tutor of Merton writes:—"I wish to be allowed as a former Tutor, and one who has had some twenty years' experience of College life, to add my testimony to the truth and necessity of what you have urged. The evils of the present state of things I have long felt to be very great, and I only add the expression of my opinion to assure you how wide-spread is this feeling on the part of older and thoughtful residents, and this perhaps to an extent of which you may not be aware."

Mr. Liddon, Student of Christ Church, late Vice-Principal of St. Edmund Hall, writes under date of Nov. 25, 1865:—"I cannot allow myself to thank you for a copy of your letter to the Vice-Chancellor without saying how entirely I agree with every word of it, and how great in my opinion will be the service which you will have rendered to the best interests of all to whom it refers, if happily it should lead to some practical results."

IV. You represent me as recommending "that the Parochial Service at St. Mary's be extinguished." On the contrary, I prefaced my letter with the remark that, though, I believed, the Vice-Chancellor had the power to fix the time of the University Sermons, he would be unwilling to exercise it, so as to interfere with the Parochial Service, but that I was sure an arrangement might be effected without much difficulty, which would satisfy the requirements both of the University and of the Parish. I know how popular, and deservedly popular, are the ministrations of the present Vicar of St. Mary's, and courtesy, if no higher motive,

would have prevented me from recommending anything which would interfere with his usefulness. But if it were really shewn that it is for the interests of the University that the Morning Sermon should be preached at a later hour than it is at present, I do not think it would be too much to ask that the Parochial Service should commence at 10, the hour at which, I believe, the Morning Prayer is said in most Cathedrals, and that, if necessary, on those Sundays on which the Holy Communion is administered, the Litany should be said at an Afternoon Service. At the meeting at which this subject was first brought forward, you told us that you were thinking of memorializing the Vice-Chancellor to change the hour of the University Sermon from 10.30 to 10 or 10.15. Apparently you think it not unreasonable to require that Members of the University should have breakfasted, and attended two separate Services, in time to hear a University Sermon at 10, while with regard to your own congregation you say, "I should altogether decline to request the large congregation which now comes to my Church at 11.30 to come instead at so early an hour as 10 o'clock." You call St. Mary's "my Church." I will not criticize the expression. You are the Incumbent, and may fairly call the Church yours. But we also have a right to look upon it as in some sense ours. It is appointed by Statute that the University Sermons shall be preached in it. We style it the University Church. We have lately spent many large sums on its restoration. On the restoration of the spire considerable sums were spent in 1848, and again on the tower in 1851. In 1860-1 £695 was spent on warming the Church. In 1861 the University undertook by vote of Convocation to provide £3,900

for the restoration of the exterior, Oriel College providing £1,000, and the Parish £500 out of a special fund for repairs of the fabric. In 1864 there was another grant made by the University of £285 for the southern wall of the Churchyard; and last summer a further grant of £250 was made for the iron railing on the north side. The porch will cost the University about £300 more. The annual expenses also defrayed by the University are considerable. Before long I hope that we shall be as liberal in providing grants for the improvement of the interior. We should not, I suppose, spend these large sums of money on St. Mary's Church, if it were nothing more to us than one of the Parish Churches of Oxford. The Parish of St. Mary's consists of about 250 persons. It is not the convenience of the congregation that attends your Service, but the convenience of your Parish, that the University is bound to consider. Should it at any time, therefore, be found impossible so to arrange our Services as to satisfy the requirements both of the Parish and of the University, it would be advisable that the University should build a separate Church either for itself or for the Parish of St. Mary's.

V. As I am not writing in self-defence, but in defence of the scheme which I have at heart, I need only allude briefly to the passage in your second letter in which you speak of "the impertinences of the Christ Church Censor." I cannot conceive to what you refer. You cannot be alluding to my letter to the Vice-Chancellor. I challenge you to point out in it a single uncourteous word. You cannot be alluding to my conduct towards yourself personally. Before I moved in this matter I wrote to you. I invited you to attend the meeting at which the subject

was to be discussed. You answered that you would attend, if you could. I wrote again, urging you to attend, on the ground that no change whatever could be proposed, unless you attended. You cannot say that at the meeting we did not treat you with proper deference, or did not listen to you attentively. In fact, it was in compliance with your wishes that in our Memorial to the Council we fixed upon the hour 12.30. As soon as my letter was published, I sent you a copy. By the way, why did you not return the compliment? It was from a passing remark that I heard of your letter. I was told that it was very entertaining, but that it did not require an answer. If it did not require an answer, I thought at first that it would be better for me not to read it, for an attack may be very entertaining to others without being entertaining to the person attacked.

And now I will turn to the advice which you yourself give. You cannot deny the existence of an evil which requires to be remedied. You cannot deny that the great majority of the Undergraduates neglect to attend the University Sermon, and consequently are left to themselves on Sunday with nothing given them to occupy their thoughts from 9 or 10 a.m. to 4 or 5 p.m. You cannot deny that these are the very persons whom we should especially seek to influence, as being least likely to observe Sunday well. What remedy do you suggest? "Let each Tutor earnestly and affectionately exhort his pupils, singly, and in private, always to attend one of the University Sermons." Yet you go on to say of these Sermons which the Tutors are to exhort their pupils to attend, that they are "*as a rule*, unattractive, unimpressive, uninteresting." But possibly I am criticizing your words unfairly. Pos-

sibly you would wish the Tutors to refrain from exhorting their pupils to attend the University Sermon until the Preaching Cycle has been remodelled, and "none but extraordinary Divines or else confessedly excellent *Preachers* are allowed to fill the University pulpit." I agree with you in thinking that the Preaching Cycle should be remodelled, though I am of opinion that you are needlessly severe on the Preachers whom our present system supplies. But I fear we shall have a long and hard battle to fight before we can carry this reform. I will suppose, however, that your recommendation has passed into a statute. I will suppose also that you have persuaded the College Tutors throughout Oxford to advise their pupils to attend the Morning Sermon, and, as the best of all arguments, themselves to make a point of attending. I will suppose further, that the Tutors are sufficiently eloquent to induce their pupils to act on this advice. What follows? Three-fourths will fail to obtain seats.

Far better that we all should be within the walls of our College Chapels at 10.30; and that at 12, such as are qualified to derive profit from the University Sermon should attend it, while for others a College Sermon of a practical character should be provided at the Afternoon Service in their several Chapels.

I know the objections that are brought against College Sermons. It is said that they interfere with the University Sermon. This need not be the case. Rather I should say they supply a want which the University Sermon does not meet, being addressed to the men whom I believe no eloquence of the Tutors would induce to attend the University Sermon, and who I think are not of a character to be greatly bene-

fited by it, could they be induced to attend. It is said that in small Colleges it would be difficult to find a preacher. Possibly it might be difficult, if a Sermon were required every Sunday, but not impossible if Sermons were required twice or thrice in the Term. It is no doubt more difficult to preach to a small congregation than to such a congregation as would be formed by the Undergraduates of Christ Church or of Exeter College; but that it is not impossible was shewn by the late Vice-Principal of St. Edmund Hall, who always preached a short practical Sermon after the Second Lesson at the Afternoon Service. And the greater the difficulty, the greater the merit of success. It is said again that College Tutors at the present time are so much divided in opinion on theological subjects that it would be impossible to secure uniformity of teaching. But this argument tells as powerfully against the University Sermon as against College Sermons. However, in the case of College Sermons the danger, I think, is imaginary. The Preachers would be members of the same Society. This, if nothing else, would prevent them from preaching upon subjects about which they knew that differences existed among themselves. But should it ever happen that various shades of theological opinion were brought before their hearers, the discovery that good men sometimes differ would teach us to be generous in our sympathies and tolerant towards those with whom we disagree. And this in itself is no unimportant lesson. Sermons, however, in a College Chapel should be of a practical character; and though in Oxford at present we may be divided on questions of speculative theology, on the great truths and duties of practical religion we are all at one. It would also be a great advantage to

the Tutors themselves to be called upon to preach, as fitting them for their future parochial duties, as bringing them in contact with thoughts higher than those suggested by their ordinary work, and as reminding them that their office is not merely to instruct the intellect. It is too much the fashion at the present time to regard it as the great, almost the sole work of a College Tutor, to train up first-class men.

You ask, "*Why*, since a College Service at 10, and a College Sermon at 11 o'clock on Sunday morning, are known to be necessary for the spiritual bettering of Christ Church—why in the name of common sense, does not Christ Church adopt the practice of having them both? What hinders?"

A College Sermon as a general rule at 11 o'clock on Sunday morning has not been suggested. All that I suggested was, that a College Sermon might *occasionally* be preached at the Morning Service. It might be preached, for example, whenever the University Sermon is not preached in the University Church.

To the change of the hour of Morning Service in Christ Church there are two hindrances. First an University Statute. It is true that the Statute is obsolete, and cannot be enforced. The Undergraduates of Christ Church and Exeter College alone would fill the galleries of St. Mary's. In the second place Christ Church Cathedral is occupied by the University at 10.30, whenever one of the Canons is called upon to preach in his turn as Canon. You appear to be unaware that the arrangement of our Services is not in the hands of the Dean, Censors, and Tutors. Had we the power, we should have followed the example of Trinity College, Cambridge, and adopted the plan which you suggest.

Your second letter has given me the opportunity of again calling attention to this subject. But for your criticisms probably the matter before this would have been forgotten. It is difficult to gain the ear of the University. At present the University is engrossed in considering various plans of self-extension. It has a great work in hand. Our immediate duty, however, is to those who are already in our charge. If it be a fact, as it undoubtedly is, that Sunday in Oxford is not observed so well as it would be under a different arrangement of Morning Services—if it be a fact, as it undoubtedly is, that large numbers of the Undergraduates never hear a word of advice addressed to them from the pulpit from the day they enter to the day they leave the University,—if it be a fact, as it undoubtedly is, that Oxford men after they have left the University look back with bitter regret on their misspent Sundays, we are not discharging our responsibilities faithfully if we neglect to supply a remedy for this great evil.

The subject of University Extension originated with certain Members of Convocation who had in view the wants of the English Church. They proposed to found a College or Hall especially intended for the education of men who, it was hoped, would take Holy Orders. The subject now has assumed a wider range. But at the outset it was an answer to the call which the country addressed to the University to provide additional clergy. It was found that the number of clergy educated at Oxford, instead of increasing in proportion to the increasing wants of the country, was gradually diminishing. Far be it from me to desire that the University, or any College in the University, should be converted

into a clerical seminary; yet more might be made of existing materials in aid of the present wants of the English Church, if from time to time we set before our pupils the dignity of the clerical office; if we endeavoured to interest them, so far as our experience might enable us, in Church work, and taught them all, whether they intend to take Holy Orders or no, to feel their responsibilities and duties as Churchmen; if we did more to call out their devotional feelings by Services of a more hearty and attractive character, and, by the establishment of College Sermons, "sent the message to those who neglect themselves to seek it;" if we gave more encouragement to the study of Theology; if we established the weekly Communion in every College; if by more regular attendance at the daily College Service we proved our sense of its meaning, and shewed that we feel it to be the most important act of our common life, and not a mere muster for the sake of order and discipline, not a mere machinery for producing regular habits. As in a religious household the day is begun and ended with family prayer, so in College we meet as members of a family, a society with common interests, common responsibilities, a common work, and a common life.

In this letter I have endeavoured, as far as possible, to keep clear of everything personal. The subject is one of public interest, and not a question between yourself and any Censor of Christ Church, past or present. It is for this reason that I have not alluded to your animadversions on Mr. Kitchin's letter. You seem to think that he was not the right person to reply in my defence. In this, I am afraid, I cannot agree with you. Though it was not at my request, but at the prompting of his own generous

nature, that he came forward, yet there is no one to whom I would more gladly have committed my cause. We have been close friends for nearly twenty years: for two years we were Censors together, and while colleagues we endeavoured to effect at Christ Church the change advocated in our letters; though he is devotedly attached to the House of which he is a distinguished member, he is known to be too large-hearted and liberal-minded to support a scheme in the sole interest of any one Society.

Allow me to express a hope, that in the year which is just opening a plan may be devised which will suit both the interests of your own Parish, and those of the University. I do not tie my scheme to any particular hour. My letter was written by way of suggestion. My words were general; my plan tentative. I wished to shew a want, rather than to recommend a definite remedy. Had I selfishly consulted my own inclination, or the advantage of my own College, I should have proposed the arrangement lately adopted by the sister University. But I remembered that while at Cambridge the Afternoon University Sermon was the more popular, at Oxford the Morning Sermon is better attended than the Sermon in the Afternoon; and while in the larger Colleges which have a choir, the establishment of a College Service at 10 or 11, with a Sermon, might be acceptable, it would not be in smaller Colleges, which have no choir, and only a small staff of Tutors in Holy Orders to supply preachers.

There is very much in your letter in which I most cordially concur. I agree with you in wishing that the University Sermons were more effective, and better attended. I agree with you also in thinking that

College Tutors would do well to exhort their pupils to attend; but the advice should be given with discrimination. It should be given to those who are likely to follow it. It should be given to those who are likely to be impressed, interested, and benefited by an University Sermon. It is bad policy in such a matter to give advice which will certainly be disregarded, or which, if followed, might be unprofitable. I agree with you also in considering that the Preaching Cycle should be remodelled, though your strictures on the present system may be thought extravagant. Above all I agree with your remarks on the instincts of the Undergraduates, and on the secret of good College discipline. The Undergraduates are, as you say, and nowhere more than in Christ Church, "amenable in a high degree," "as a body very easily influenced for good," "the flower of England's gentry." But College discipline, to be successful, must not be officious, minute, or worrying. It should be "the loving guidance of a firm strong hand." But Undergraduates should not feel too plainly that they are governed. Though they may sometimes behave as boys, they must always be treated as men. They must be treated courteously; they must be treated good-humouredly. The great end of University and College discipline is to teach manly self-dependence, self-control, self-discipline.

What my special object is in the present movement I cannot shew better than by a quotation from a note which I have lately received:—"Though no longer an Undergraduate, the bitter memory of my misspent Sundays at Oxford causes me to sympathize most fully with your movement. The scheme you propose would, I feel, have greatly assisted me to remain 'more loyal

to the principles of my early training.' Such expressions as these,—'A service which would keep up the recollection of the Church of his home,' 'a practical sermon preached to them in their College Chapel by a person whom they know and who knows them,' 'to stir us to live up to the pleadings of our higher nature,' and 'no wonder that Sunday is a favourite day for breakfast parties and luncheons, and for idling in the College quadrangle,'—all these find a deep echo in my own memory of wants and failures. I will not trouble you with my own experience; you almost mention it, good and bad alike. I will but repeat my joy at your effort, which is, I am sure, in the right direction."

But I have written a much longer letter than I had intended. Should you think fit to reply to it, I hope you will criticize the suggestions it contains in the same friendly spirit as that in which they are offered. We have both the same great aims in view, though the field of our labours is different. Far better that we should work together for the good of those whom respectively we desire to serve, than that we should "pull" one another's "plans to pieces."

Believe me to be,

Yours very truly,

CHARLES WALDEGRAVE SANDFORD.

CHRIST CHURCH,
January 19, 1866.

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